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Front Page	2nd Page	Other Page
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Insider's Newsletter . . .

A rather anticlimactic and ironic scene took place two weeks ago when CIA director Richard Helms testified in secret session before Sen. Richard Russell's (D-Ga.) "watchdog" subcommittee on CIA activities. Present for the first time was chairman J. William Fulbright of the Foreign Relations Committee, whose criticisms last year of the CIA's allegedly hawkish influence on U.S. foreign policy led to a compromise agreement to invite him and two members of his committee to watchdog hearings.

In revealing the substance of agent reports highly critical of the bombing of North Vietnam, Helms reportedly gave the CIA's foremost critic ammunition with which to confront Secretary of State Dean Rusk in closed Foreign Relations Committee hearings last week. Russell, a leading hawk, found the CIA report disconcerting and now feels that much of the bombing has proved ineffective and extravagantly expensive.

MEANWHILE, Pentagon sources fear the cost of bombing in North Vietnam may rise even higher. Intelligence reports indicate that the existing North Vietnamese air defense setup, consisting of conventional anti-aircraft guns and Soviet SAM's in the Guideline series, with a range of 30 miles and effective at altitudes of 80,000 feet, is being revamped. Soviet-built Grifon and Ganef anti-aircraft missiles have impact, range and altitude capabilities far in excess of the Guideline series which is already hurting U.S. aircraft.

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